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SUBJECT: TURKEY'S FIRST FEMALE JUDGE ON THE EUROPEAN COURT  
OF HUMAN RIGHTS: PROFESSOR ISIL KARAKAS

¶1. (U) The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly appointed Professor Isil Karakas as the new Turkish judge on the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on January 22. With this appointment, Karakas became the first, female Turkish jurist to be given a European appointment. According to the European Convention on Human Rights, each contracting country proposes three names to the Assembly, and the Assembly appoints one of the three. Prof. Karakas received 136 of 178 total votes in the Assembly, winning by a large margin ahead of the other two Turkish candidates. The appointment for Turkey's slot was due in October, but two of the three names proposed by the government were not deemed qualified enough. The Assembly's Justice Commission had said the Turkish government was trying to impose a specific name by adding two lower-profile names to the list. Prof. Karakas was not one of the names on the first list. She will be on the Court for six years.

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Biographic Data  
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¶2. (U) Professor Isil Karakas graduated from Istanbul's Galatasaray High School in 1978 and earned an undergraduate degree in Political Science from Istanbul University in 1983.

After a year at Bogazici University's School of Foreign Languages, she returned to Istanbul University where she completed an M.A. in Public Law. In 1990, Karakas received her second license degree from Marmara University's Law School. She finished her dissertation on Public Law and earned her Ph.D. in 1992, again from Marmara University.

¶3. (U) Karakas taught at Istanbul University's Political Science Department beginning in 1983 as an associate professor, and later as an assistant professor in 1999. That same year she transferred to Galatasaray University and became a full professor in 2003. The following year, she became the Deputy Dean of the Law School of Galatasaray University. Her areas of special interest are European Union law, and international human rights law. Along with her academic career, she held different positions at various research centers, including the Human Rights Law Research Center of Istanbul University, and the European Studies and Documentation Center of Galatasaray University. She published two books: European Constitution (2005), and Diversite Culturelle en Turquie et en Europe (Cultural Diversity in Turkey and in Europe, 2004). She also has many published articles on European law, human rights law, fundamental rights and freedoms, and on government responsibilities within the context of the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights decisions.

¶3. (U) Prof. Karakas is known as a liberal academic who opposed some controversial court decisions in the past. She was critical of the Constitutional Court decision to close down former Prime Minister Erbakan's Refah (Welfare) Party, as well as the ECHR decision that approved it. She is also known to oppose Turkey's headscarf ban at universities, which the ECHR ruled was legal in 2005.

¶4. (U) Professor Karakas is married to Eser Karakas, a fellow professor who is well-known in Turkey for his liberal, pro-EU views.

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